

CHAPTER VII

SEXUAL LIFE

000 By sexual life is here meant the whole relationship between a man and a woman. It includes not only the sex act, but also the daily sharing of duties, the little acts of affection, and even the quarrels, and comprises the whole system of sentiments which develop out of the life in common between a man and a woman. The bonds of affection which may perhaps be primarily based on sexual attraction are strengthened and reinforced by all the casual intimacies of family life, and even the disputes and quarrels are part of it.

MARRIAGE

595 Before going into detail it is necessary to sketch the outlines of the marriage pattern. Marriage may be polygamous, polyandrous, or monogamous. In the past, most men had two wives, but rarely more than that at a time, with the exception of a chief, who might have three or four. A man marries them at different times, and the woman he marries first is known as *aeina towānmaga* (literally, woman first). The second woman he marries is known as *aeina inil* (literally, woman later time). The husband, however, addresses them both by the same term, *nunga tumbo* (my wife). The children of either wife call each one *nangga*, mother.

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Occasionally the two women live in the same house, but much more frequently the husband builds a separate house for each wife. He sleeps with one wife one night, and with the other on another night. Each wife has her own garden, and the husband works in their gardens alternately, usually going in the morning to the garden of the one with whom he has slept.

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Wife number one has a certain precedence over the other. 595
When the husband returns from fishing he gives the fish to wife number one, who then divides it with wife number two. The same order is followed with baked pig, or any other food which the husband brings home from a feast. Number one will always give half the food to number two, but the former would be very angry and feel insulted if her husband should not give the food to her first. [57P]

A woman may also have two husbands, known as husband number one (*tamuth towanmaga*, man first time) and number two (*tamuth inil*, man later), in the order in which she has acquired them. She calls both of them *nunga malis*, my husband. There is no evidence of a woman ever having more than two husbands at one time. Number one makes the marriage payment to his wife's maternal relatives in the traditional manner. Number two, however, pays the *tsera* to number one and not to his wife's clan relatives. Should husband number one die, number two will stay on with the woman and make no additional payment to her clan relatives. It is considered that the payment is finished when he pays number one at the beginning of the marriage. [601] [583]

Both husbands bring the woman fish, pig, etc., and she cooks for each one. The three eat together, the two men with the bundle of taro between them, and the woman close by. Sometimes the three sleep in the same house, three beds in a row, and the woman between the two men. At other times husband number two will sleep in the men's house, and the woman will sleep with her husbands alternately. There appears to be no quarrelling between the two men. The children of the woman call both men *mum* (father). In the past these polyandrous marriages were the exception rather than the rule, and there is only one such marriage in Lesu now. The first husband died during my visit, and the second then became husband number one. [601]

Monogamous marriages also existed in the past, and

- 595 to-day it is the more usual type, although most of the adult, middle-aged men of Lesu had had two wives, and later, because of white influence, gave up one. There are, however, still about six households in the village where the marriage is polygamous.

837 While white contact may have influenced the form of marriage, it has had relatively very little influence on extra-marital intercourse. This continues much the same as it did in the past. Each man has his *affaires de cœur* outside of marriage, and his wife has hers at the same time. This is a social custom with all the force of tradition.

586 Divorce is also an important element in the marriage structure. It occurs fairly frequently, and either party may secure it. The marriage payment is always returned to the husband, and the children go with the mother, no matter who initiates the divorce. The reasons for a divorce, its frequency, and the social attitude toward it, will be examined in another section of the chapter. At this point we are interested only in the general configuration.

595 It is into this social structure of formerly polygamous marriages, which within the last few years have become in general monogamous (but with a certain number of polygamous unions still in existence), occasional polyandrous marriages, occasional divorce and much extra-marital intercourse on both sides, that the sexual life of these men and women is set.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS LOVE

- 832 To know what is meant in Lesu by falling in love, it is necessary to understand what the individual considers attractive in the opposite sex, how the man woos his mate, how she responds, and what are the details of their life together. These are to a large degree socially determined, i.e. there is a general unanimity on what is considered a beautiful woman, and there is a more or less standardized

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present husband, Ongas, was betrothed to her. He brought a gift of food to her mother and other clan relatives, who then gave their consent to the betrothal. Pulong a little later went to stay with her betrothed's mother. Ongas, of course, slept in the men's house. 159

At her first menses there were the customary rites, followed by the marriage rites and payment. He came to live in her hamlet, where he built a house for them.

After marriage she had many lovers in the bush, so many that she has lost count of them. There were no intrigues lasting any length of time. Her lovers all paid *tsera* to her, which she gave to Ongas. Sometimes he was cross if she had a lover, but at other times he was complacent. The latter state of mind was the more usual for him. 159 837

Ongas took a second wife, but later divorced her because he was afraid of the missions. 159 [595]

Pulong and he worked on the mainland of New Guinea (during the German administration). When their working time was up they returned to Lesu, and now say that they will never leave it. Pulong has one daughter now just past puberty. She has had several other children, all of whom died at birth or shortly afterwards. ●

To-day she and Ongas live an affectionate and what appears to be a quietly happy life.¹ She is busy and gay, fond of gossip, and a leader in communal undertakings. One might speak of her as one of the "first ladies" of the village. This comes partly from her husband's position of Luluai, but also from her own very pleasant personality.

The life history of Taiti, one of my servants who was with me in the beginning of my visit, is an unusually sophisticated one, due to her contact with white people since her early childhood. Her parents worked on a plantation, where she

¹ The affectionate care given by Ongas during Pulong's illness has already been described.

- 601 *Papa Ruang*.—Son of husband's mother's brother; husband's sister's husband; elder brother (woman speaking).
- Kogule*.—Father's sister's daughter; mother's brother's daughter; wife's mother.
- Muge*.—Mother's brother's son (woman speaking); father's sister's son (woman speaking); son of father's sister's daughter; son of wife's mother's father's sister; husband of sister's daughter; daughter's husband (woman speaking); wife's brother; sister's husband's son and the mother's father's sister.
- Namogo*.—Husband of mother's brother's daughter; son of wife's father's sister; husband of father's sister's daughter; son of wife's mother's brother.
- Magambutung*.—Wife; daughter of father's sister's daughter; daughter of mother's brother's daughter.
- Leruung*.—Husband; son of mother's mother's brother; son of mother's father's sister.
- Anmula Ruang*.—Wife's father; daughter's husband; husband of brother's daughter.
- Mela Ruang*.—Son of mother's brother's daughter; son of the wife's mother's father's sister; son of the mother's mother's brother; sister's husband; wife's brother.
- Luap Tuang*.—Wife's sister's husband.
- Papa* (sometimes *Papa Ruang*).—Brother; sister (woman speaking); brother's wife's sister (woman speaking).
- Pava*.—Brother's wife; husband's brother; wife's sister; sister's husband (woman speaking).
- Nemula*.—Husband's sister; brother's wife (woman speaking).
- Aia*.—Father's father; father's mother; son's son; mother's father; mother's mother; wife of brother's son; wife of sister's son; husband's mother; son's wife; husband's father; husband's father's brother.

In one case where a man has married the widow of his younger brother, and now looks after her two children, the younger brother is now referred to by his children as Aia, and their adopted father as Mamo.

Aia Rang, a term sometimes used towards the sons of the sister's sons and daughters.

Aia Rung, a term sometimes used towards the daughters of sister's sons and daughters.

• [595] Polygynous unions with two sisters are permissible. Marriage
582 between cross-cousins, however, is definitely barred. The natives say they would rather hang themselves than break this rule. It is permissible to marry the daughter of the mother's brother's daughter or

127 census are compared whenever possible to the results of this genealogical study of a smaller unit of the same people, for the purpose of checking the accuracy of the latter study.

ETHNOLOGICAL FACTS

105 Before presenting the tables it is pertinent to give a few ethnological facts related to the statistics. This group of Melanesians are an agricultural, matrilineal and matrilocal people, with exogamous moieties subdivided into clans. There is no scarcity of land, which is communally owned, and getting sufficient food is not difficult, although it requires a certain amount of industry. The diet is limited, taro being the staple food. This is supplemented by fish, pigs, yams, bananas, pawpaws, coconuts, etc.

582 Sexual customs have an important bearing on the statistics. A girl is usually married directly after her first menstruation. A man's preferred mate is the mother's brother's daughter's daughter, or the father's sister's daughter's daughter, and he is thus of a generation above his wife. While the preferred marriage quite frequently does not take place, the husband is almost always older than his wife, usually a difference of about five to ten years. The girl has had no sexual intercourse, although she has indulged in sexual play, but the man, being some years past puberty, has had sexual experience previous to the time of his marriage. There are no unmarried women. There may be a [587] couple of young widows in the community, but it is just a question of time before they remarry. Both husband and wife have extra-marital intercourse and there is no social stigma in having lovers or mistresses. 837 Rather, it is the correct thing to do. The husband of the mother is [851] always the sociological father of her children. Until very recently it was quite usual for a man to have two wives and this had been the case with most of the married men of my community. It was relatively rare for a woman to have two husbands, although it did and still does happen 797 occasionally. Missions have taught a monogamous system of marriage, [545] with partial success. Polygamy still exists, but not to the same degree or extent as it did a generation ago. White contact has scarcely affected [837] extra-marital intercourse. Should the village be close to a mission center (mine was not) love affairs would simply be carried on more surreptitiously,